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creeping socialism?

Today, there is much talk about "creeping socialism." Too few Americans know what it is: too many know only the scare words and not the facts.

Powerful reactionary forces have tried to block recognition of the nature of the world in which we live. They would blind us to the fact that "free enterprise" all too often is a euphemism for the



The Government Owns It

right of powerful economic interests to loot the public treasury and the citizen's pocketbook. And they would prevent us from seeing that what is called "creeping socialism" is really the welfare state. It is a variety of democratic methods adopted by the American people, after trial and error, to solve the economic problems they face in this complex industrial society.

And, after all, what is the purpose of government if not to promote the welfare of all the people and preserve liberty?

But the people who want to buy the Post Office, the government dams, and the public power plants at bargain prices have a stake in public confusion. The facts prove that neither "creeping socialism" nor democratic socialism is a half-way house to Communism; no country with a strong democratic socialist movement has ever gone Communist.

If anything, "creeping socialism" must be made to stand up and walk.

Government in Business

No democratic socialist wants the government to own all business. He recognizes the value of diversity in forms of ownership — public, cooperative and private. But the natural resources upon which our common life depends should be the property of the people, not the few. And where monopolies make for the most efficient production and distribution of goods, they should be socially owned and controlled. The important fact to keep in mind, moreover, is that there has been a great deal of government in business in the United States without any sacrifice of freedom. The same is

true of Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Many of the people who oppose "creeping socialism" are not even aware of the many fields in which our government has done and is doing business.

The United States Government manufactures uniforms, paint, rope, flags, ink, ice cream, boxes, and chemicals; publishes and prints magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets, maps, and charts; "writes" life insurance, deposit insurance, and crop insurance; conducts major banking operations; owns and operates major enterprises in basic industries, including telegraphy, radio broadcasting, electric power generation and distribution, and tin smelting; possesses a virtual monopoly of postal services and the atomic field; owns many defense plants, most of which are leased to private manufacturers, a hemp plantation, coffee roasting plants, and many retail establishments; and conducts major real estate operations, both as a landlord and a promoter of developments. And this list is far from complete, it should be noted.

Something of the real nature of "creeping socialism" also is indicated by the fact that politicians *both* profess their acceptance of it and sabotage its implementation. As, for example, in the case of

Housing

Item: On November 1, 1952, speaking in Boston, General Eisenhower said, "We must have better housing for those Americans who are now forced to live in slums and substandard dwellings."

"Humpty Dumpty Sat on a Wall . . ."



Item: On March 25, 1953, it was reported that President Eisenhower was recommending a cut from the 75,000 public housing units proposed by President Truman to only 35,000 units.

Item: Subsequently, however, the House of Representatives voted to cut off *all* public housing funds — an action the President refused to criticize.

Item: Yet, on May 11, 1953, the President declared, "Americans of all parties have now accepted as a moral obligation the important task of progressively improving our housing standards and of providing decent housing for those compelled to live in slums. . . ."

Item: On July 20, 1953, it was reported that a House-Senate conference had agreed on a "compromise" appropriation for 20,000 public housing units.

Health Services

Few people would contest the right of every individual to obtain adequate health services. The scourge of disease and accident are feared by all, and there is universal sympathy for the afflicted.

Yet, the medical profession — through the American Medical Association — has set itself apart from the people on this point, even though the time-honored Hippocratic Oath makes no mention of profit.

Even *Life*, usually not above making attacks on "creeping socialism," was moved to comment recently:

"Typical of the AMA's fastidious sense of public rela-

"The Boy at the Dike"



tions was a resolution . . . which branded the federal regulation that provides free diagnostic service for crippled children as 'Socialistic. . . .'

"The House of Delegates must stop behaving as though all organization and efforts to provide more medical care for less money are necessarily 'Socialistic' or machinations of the devil. . . ."

Yet, because of the pressure of this exceptionally well-financed lobby, "socialism" today often creeps in reverse, as when the Truman administration hacked down on its proposal for national health insurance. And, even so, the Truman Commission, which proposed a "voluntary" program, also was attacked viciously—for it dared to document the health needs of the American people and, in so doing, showed up the monopolistic practices of the medical profession and evaluated their impact on the people's health.

Was it "creeping socialism" or the facts that the reactionaries feared in this case?

And who was reducing whose freedom?

The Gentleman Calls It "Creeping Socialism"

And the gentleman in question, President Eisenhower, was considerably confused.

The *New York Times* said that his designation of the Tennessee Valley Authority as "creeping socialism" and his contention that he was not out to destroy it contradicted each other. It also noted that

TVA could not possibly have been carried out by any form of private enterprise.

The Tennessee Valley is *one* out of many river valleys that could benefit from the flood control, power generation, aid to navigation, and resource conservation and development policies that are co-ordinated in democratic fashion, as it happens, only in the Tennessee Valley.

TVA benefits *all* the people. That makes it "creeping socialism."

What is the alternative?

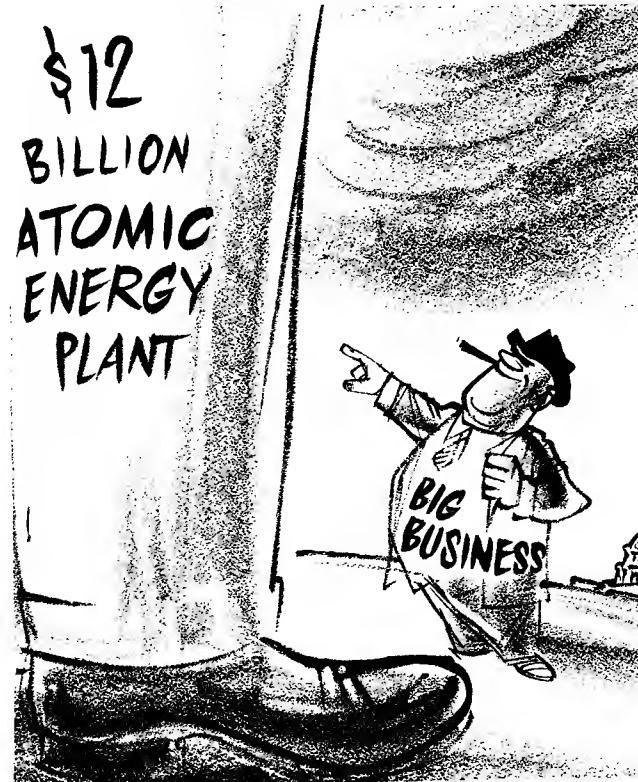
Here is *part* of the record:

In Oregon and Washington in 1948, the Columbia and Willamette Rivers washed away more than fifty people—"missing or dead." In 1951, floods centering in the Kansas City area killed more than forty people and caused estimated damage of more than three-quarters of one billion dollars. In 1952, floods in the Missouri and Mississippi valleys caused damage estimated at three hundred million dollars. And the human misery spread throughout eight states can not and could not be estimated. No valley authority, no "socialism" of any kind—but plenty of "free enterprise" and raging rivers.

TVA is not only protection against catastrophe, however; it also means more of the "little" things that make life happier and more comfortable. For example, before TVA, only three and one-half percent of the area's farms were electrified; now, over ninety percent have electricity.

Who said that there was nothing "to take away?"

"Mac—I Could Use You!"



Atomic Power!

"Atomic Power!" is the title of a song in the "mountaineer" vein, but it is a force that cannot be handled safely by either

mountaineers or businessmen.

Businessmen have neither a moral nor an economic right to atomic energy and its development. The discovery of the fission of the atomic nucleus was the work of a *body* of scientists who, in turn, had inherited the knowledge of earlier generations of scientists. And the dangerous work of making the bombs and getting "hot stuff" into production was left to thousands of technicians and craftsmen who risked death by explosion or radiation every working day. And, finally, the people of the United States paid two billion dollars for the original project. In short, cooperative action, not "free enterprise," turned the trick.

Official recognition of this principle was embodied in the Atomic Energy Act sponsored by the late Senator Brien McMahon. But powerful forces are trying to turn away the past — a fact moving the late Republican Senator Charles Tobey, to say that

"This awesome power is a sacred trust placed in our hands. It came from the government, which is the people. It belongs to us all. It must never be allowed to pass into private hands which might misuse it."



This? —

Congress gave away forty billion dollars rightfully belonging to the American people when it gave the tidelands oil and gas reserves to a few states — which, unhappily, means to the oil interests.

The tidelands precedent can touch off, unless the people act, what Oscar Chapman, former Secretary of the Interior, termed "the greatest give-away program in the history of the world."

The public domain — all that belongs to all of us through our government — has an estimated value of one *trillion* dollars — yes, a *trillion* — in the continental United States and five hundred and fifty million dollars in Alaska. Why must the seven hundred million acres of national forests and parks, wild-life refuges, and public lands be turned over to free-booting spoilers? In the light of the rape of such resources by such people in the past, what “principle” demands it?

Way back, when “McKinleyism” and all it stood for was still vivid in the minds of the American people, another voice, a Republican voice, spoke dramatically on the question of natural resources. Theodore Roosevelt knew that our land was rich but that, increasingly, we would face the problem of husbanding our resources carefully. And, as rugged an exponent of individualism as he was, he spoke in no uncertain terms against unfettered private development and exploitation of those resources.

Now, fifty years later, can we afford to take another, more wasteful course? Can it mean anything else except the deterioration into a spent land of the United States, still a land of plenty?

— Or This?

A future we can face with some confidence that we will not be betrayed by barbarians within our country.

Totalitarian Communism assaults our outer defenses, and we cannot afford to have them crumble beneath us — empty of all sustenance, drained by waste, despoiled by the lust for profit and quick gain.

“Creeping socialism,” or what there is of it in relation to our whole economic life, has given us some measure of security in freedom. Perhaps, then, it is easy to see that a “socialism” that stands up and walks can serve us well in obtaining more security and more freedom. It is the challenge we face as Americans and as citizens of an interdependent world. The time for the creeping exploration of new approaches is past; now we must face the future.

UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, which has issued this pamphlet as part of its educational program, invites inquiries from the readers of this pamphlet, to whom it offers literature explaining its aims and purposes. Direct your letters to UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM, Room 706, 112 East 19th Street, New York 3, N. Y.

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The cartoons are by Bernard Seaman and originally were published in *Justice*. They appear here by permission of the artist.